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#### ARTICLES:

(1) Poll on LDP, DPJ (Mainichi)

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
September 1, 2007

#### Questions & Answers

(T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: Which political party between the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan would you like to see win in the next election for the House of Representatives?

	T	P	M	F
LDP	37	36	38	
DPJ	44	50	41	
Other parties	13	9	16	

Q: The DPJ has now become the largest party in the House of Councillors. What would you like the DPJ to do?

	T	P	M	F
Go for all-out confrontation with the ruling parties even though national administration may be confused	31	31	30	
Cooperate with the ruling parties to a certain extent so as to avoid				

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confusing national administration 64 64 65

Q: Do you think the DPJ is competent enough to take the reins of government?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	44	49	40	
No	51	45	54	

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Aug. 27-28 over the telephone with the aim of calling a total of 1,000 voters across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 924 persons.

(2) Agriculture Minister Endo's resignation to cast pall over ruling parties' reform of agricultural administration; Fierce confrontation with opposition camp likely to occur, causing delay in coordination

YOMIURI (Page 7) (Excerpts)  
September 3, 2007

Agriculture Minister Endo had decided to step down, following the revelation of wrongdoings by an agricultural cooperative, where he served as a head. The incident will likely cast a pall over reform of agricultural administration to be carried out by the government and the ruling camp. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) will hurry to compile a farmland reform plan allowing companies entry into agriculture this fall with the aim of expanding the scale of Japan's farm management. However, the resignation of the agricultural minister, the central command of the reform drive, could delay coordination within the government and the ruling parties. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) is set for submitting to the extraordinary Diet session a bill to introduce an income compensation system for individual farmers. Confrontation between the ruling and opposition camps will likely heat up.

Major shift in agricultural administration

The outline of the farmland reform plan, which MAFF presented to the

ministry's expert council on Aug. 24, focuses on a switch to large-scale and efficient agriculture instead of inefficient agriculture based on cultivation of crops on small patches of land. Under the reform plan, key farmers and companies will rent farmlands from small-scale farmers and operate them.

The plan takes into view an amendment to the Agricultural Land Law, which stipulates that farming land belongs to its cultivators, through the correction of the land-owing farmer system, which has been in place since the emancipation of farming land in 1947. MAFF also intends to scrap in principle the regulation that limits farming land that can be rented to companies to abandoned farming land.

MAFF is aiming at finalizing the farming land reform plan by November and submitting bills amending the Farming Land Law and the Farm Management Base Strengthening Promotion Law to the regular Diet session to be convened next year so that they can be implemented within fiscal 2008. Agriculture Minister Endo during an inauguration press conference on August 27 indicated a strong desire to introduce large-scale farm management, saying, "Small farmers have in a way neglected efforts to strengthen their farming methods."

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### Flurry of scandals

However, some LDP members are resentful at the plan with a member of the Agriculture and Forestry Division saying, "Is the government going to abandon farming land to companies?" Coordination of views on this issue within the ruling camp is lagging behind due in part to a series of scandals involving former Agriculture Ministers Matsuoka and Akagi. MAFF had prepared measures to ease shockwaves from a drastic change. Such measures include (1) possession of land by companies will not be allowed; and (2) authorities to designate farmland that can be rented should be given to municipalities in order to prevent competition between key farmers and companies. However, the resignation of Endo could take the wind from MAFF's sails.

### Room for compromise?

The DPJ is criticizing the government's farmland reform plan as leading to abandoning small-scale farmers. It intends to introduce during the extraordinary Diet session a bill featuring the introduction of an income compensation system for all farm households, which was one of its election campaign pledges. Under the envisaged system, when market prices of rice, wheat, soy beans fall below production costs, the balance would be directly paid to all farm households. It will call for the inclusion of related expenses worth 1 trillion yen in the fiscal 2008 budget.

The government is critical of the DPJ proposal, saying that under such a system farmers would be satisfied with the present situation, which would hamper large-scale farm management from being promoted. However, the DPJ is also indicating readiness to scrap tariffs on agricultural goods and to accept large-scale farm management. As such, some take the view that the stances of both parties do not differ as they look, as a senior official of an agricultural organization put it.

Concerning the DPJ proposal, Agriculture Minister Endo has left room for a compromise in future talks between the ruling and opposition camps, noting, "It is true that the DPJ gained support in the Upper House election. We want to verify in detail differences between the DPJ proposal and the government-proposed measures."

However, a fierce confrontation likely to occur between the ruling and opposition parties following the resignation of the agriculture minister will leave less room for a compromise.

Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (Zenchu) Standing Director Fuji: Concentration of farming land should be carried out, centered on key farmers

Responding to an interview by the Yomiuri Shimbun, JA-Zenchu Standing Director Shigeo Fuji at a meeting of expert council on farmland policy stressed the importance of promoting large-scale farm management. He also indicated a cautious stance to the promotion of corporate access to agriculture.

"Given the nation's rapidly aging population, concentrating farming land and cultivating it in an efficient manner would lower production costs, which will lead to strengthening agriculture. The government should rush to nurture key farmers who cultivate concentrated farmland. The government and the ruling parties should

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basically promote reform.

"However, how to include a system allowing small-scale farm households and part-time farmers to take part is a pending issue. We need to have a look at the specifics of the income compensation system for individual farmers as envisaged by the DPJ.

"Discussions on free leasing of land to farmers as well as to companies, while disallowing companies to possess farmland, are going on. What is necessary is a mechanism that is compatible with the concentration of farmland on key farmers, the initial purpose of the farmland reform. The government must also consider a way of prohibiting companies that have taken part in farm management from diverting rented land for other use."

(3) LDP's Yutaka Kobayashi to resign over election violation to avoid ill effect on Diet

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpts)  
Evening, September 4, 2007

Yutaka Kobayashi, 43, a House of Representatives lawmaker of the Liberal Democratic Party reelected from the Kanagawa electoral district, whose accounting manager and others have been indicted in violation of the Public Offices Election Law, decided earlier today to give up his Diet seat. Kobayashi conveyed his intention to resign to LDP Election Strategy Headquarters General Affairs Director Yoshihide Suga who heads the Kanagawa chapter. Kobayashi is serving in his second term. Kobayashi and Suga are scheduled to hold a press conference at the Kanagawa prefectural government office this evening to announce Kobayashi's resignation. Kobayashi's decision that came on the heels of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Takehiko Endo's resignation is certain to undermine the image of the government and LDP.

(4) Interview with Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications/State Minister in Charge of Reduction of Gaps between Rural and Urban Areas Hiroya Masuda: Remove gaps between rural and urban areas in observing fiscal discipline

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
August 31, 2007

-- As the minister in charge of reducing the gaps between rural and urban areas, how do you plan to do so?

Masuda: The central government is under pressure to come up with its response to regional problems. Public works projects had an aspect of boosting local economies. We will end pork-barreling, maintain fiscal discipline and come up with ideas. I think many issues can be resolved through industrial development. If subsidies are provided to rural areas in line with the unified standards set by the central government, subsidies are offered uniformly. Subsidies provided by each ministry in most cases are intended for rural areas, but some of them are no longer of use. I need to sort them out. I have no intention at present to set up a liaison council among ministries and agencies. Medical schools have now begun moving to increase the fixed number of medical students to deal with the shortage of medical doctors. I'll do quickly what I can do quickly.

-- The tax revenue ratio of the central government to local governments is 6 to 4 at present. What do you think is a desirable

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ratio?

Masuda: I've suggested that the ratio should be changed to 1 to 1. I think it is necessary to build a new local consumption tax-centered system and redistribute the tax revenues (the central government collects to local governments) in the form of tax allocation. I thought a full debate on the consumption tax would begin after the Upper House election, but because of the (ruling bloc's crushing defeat in the election), there are no prospects for the debate to start.

--The reform of the administrative systems for decentralization of power has come to the second stage. What is the point?

Masuda: I'll do my utmost to reduce the central government's excessive involvement in local governments and obligatory factors toward them. I intend to enhance tax revenues for municipalities and also I'll expand the legislative right (of local assemblies) and the right for local governments to issue regulations. Otherwise, assemblies can't function properly in local governments.

-- How do you address the question of consolidating the present regional administrative structure of prefectures, cities, towns and villages into larger administrative units?

Masuda: I'll have the government's Council on a Regional System come up with an interim report next March. I plan to travel to rural areas and work to obtain local people's understanding.

-- What is your view about mergers of cities, towns, and villages?

Masuda: Mergers need to be promoted in a way to enhance the physical strength of municipalities. Given a steep population decrease, we need to have an idea of using regional features while reducing administrative costs, or we will find it difficult to become independent.

-- A bill revising the Broadcast Law aimed at applying new regulations to broadcast stations has been carried over to the next Diet session.

Masuda: The upcoming extraordinary session of the Diet is likely to be a difficult session. The ruling and opposition parties are likely to be more strongly confronted with each other. The bill may be revised or not revised so that it will be enacted into law. The point in this regard is how the public will think of it. Even if the bill is not modified, I deem it is important to apply it in a restrained manner.

-- What do you think is a desirable level of reduction in the NHK reception fee?

Masuda: My predecessor, Mr. Suga indicated a 20 PERCENT cut, but I don't have any figure in mind yet. I think a compulsory payment of the reception fee and a reception-fee cut should come together. Given a number of scandals involving NHK, I deem it is necessary for the executive committee to demonstrate its governing capabilities.

-- Do you have any plan to run for a Diet seat in the future?

Masuda: No, not at all.

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(5) Political distortion: LDP Secretary General Aso supports Prime Minister Abe, while seeing chance to succeed Abe

One week has passed since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shuffled his cabinet and the executive lineup of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). With an eye on the convocation on Sept. 10 of an extraordinary session of the Diet, the prime minister has tried to pull together the new cabinet and the LDP leadership, but money scandals involving cabinet ministers have yet to end. Under the political distortion, in which the opposition camp controls the House of Councillors and the ruling bloc has a majority in the House of Representatives, NIKKEI examined closely key persons who will be forced to make difficult political decisions.

Appearing on an NHK program on Sunday, LDP Secretary General Taro Aso stressed the need for preparations for the next Lower House election.

The Aso-led LDP executive board, which analyzed that one of the reasons for the party's loss in the July Upper House election was the quality of the candidates, is concerned about the 83 freshman lawmakers, the so-called Koizumi's children, who were elected in the 2005 Lower House election.

Aso did not give high-level posts to such Koizumi's children as Satsuki Katayama and Yukari Sato, who enjoy popularity. He directed Election Strategy Headquarters General Affairs Director Yoshihide Suga to get down to the selection of candidates who would win in the election.

Aso appears to have formed the new executive lineup, taking advantage the authority of secretary general. He picked Hiroyuki Hosoda, a member of the Machimura faction, as his deputy. While giving consideration to the largest faction in the LDP, he also named Toshihiro Nikai, who heads his own faction, as chairman of the General Council, Tadamori Oshima, a Komura faction member, as chairman of the Diet Affairs Committee, and Mikio Hayashi, a Yamasaki faction member, as chief deputy secretary general.

Justice Minister Kunio Hatoyama, a member of the Tsushima faction, whom Aso was said to recommend to Prime Minister Abe to have him join the new cabinet, was one of the LDP lawmakers who backed Aso last year's presidential race. Some LDP members expressed their displeasure with Aso's selection.

In the policy front, Aso places emphasis on measures to promote regional economies based on the party's historical defeat in the 29 single seats up for grabs, in which six candidates won seats but 23 lost. At a press conference on Aug. 27, Aso announced a change in the structural reform policy, criticizing former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. He stated: "We elected the person who said that he would destroy the LDP, and he did so. My mission is to rebuild the party."

Aso intends to review the local allocation tax grant system in order to win regional votes, who are gradually distancing themselves from the LDP, providing soil saving and flood control measures, including forest protection, that would be generous to local governments.

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The Aso faction held a party congratulating him on his assumption of the secretary general's post. The party was held several hours after his inaugural press conference. There, a faction member said: "(Our faction chairman) became secretary general. He would soon move toward the presidential post. Let's aim to bring about an Aso government within six months."

Yet, Aso has yet to depict his own strategy for grabbing the reins of government. If the LDP fights the next Lower House election under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe, the possibility of an Aso government will decrease whether the LDP wins or loses the election. It seems that the shortest way for Aso to assume the premiership is through a presidential election once the Abe cabinet resigns as a body. In that case, it is difficult for Aso, who heads a small faction with only 16 members, to gather support from a great number of LDP lawmakers. Aso told persons close to him: "I will support Prime Minister Abe, who defeated me in the presidential election, as

long as he is in office." Aso has often expressed his enthusiasm to become next prime minister, but the road to power may be rocky.

(6) Defense Minister Komura expresses annoyance with press reports that Moriya will become advisor to the ministry; Another commotion in Defense Ministry

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
September 1, 2007

Some press reports on Aug. 31 that Administrative Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya, who left the ministry the same day, would become an advisor to the Defense Ministry are creating a commotion. That is because Defense Minister Masahiko Komura expressed at a press conference on that morning his annoyance with those reports, saying: "I was surprised to read those newspaper articles. Nothing has been decided." Some in the ministry are perplexed at the news, worrying that Moriya might try to control the ministry from behind the scenes.

Moriya has told persons close to him about his intention to go to the ministry five days a week as an advisor. The advisory posts have been filled by former top leaders of the Defense Ministry and the Self-Defense Forces. The advisors work once a week on a part-time basis. At present, three advisors share one office. If Moriya assumed a full-time advisory post in a separate room, it would mean unusual favorable treatment.

Later in the day, Moriya told Komura: "There is no plan for me to become an advisor." Komura reportedly gave a sarcastic reply: "I am in the same position as you were when you did not hear anything from then Defense Minister Yuriko Koike."

(7) Guam booming with military procurements

ASAHI (Page 3) (Abridged)  
August 31, 2007

In May last year, the Japanese and US governments reached a final agreement to realign US forces in Japan. Since then, more than one year has passed. In order to mitigate Okinawa's burden of hosting US military bases, the US Marine Corps will relocate its command functionality and about 8,000 troops from the island prefecture to Guam. For the US military, Guam is a major strategic linchpin in the West Pacific as well as Okinawa. Guam is now already in the run-up

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to base construction. The move should be in line with the issue of relocating Futenma airfield in Okinawa. However, Futenma relocation remains deadlocked. The Asahi Shimbun reports in two parts from Guam on what is on the forefront of US military realignment.

The tourist island of Guam, about half Okinawa's main island, is now about to turn into an island of military bases.

Guam currently hosts about 6,000 troops mainly from the US Navy and Air Force. According to US Navy Capt. Robert Lee, acting director of the Joint Guam Program Office for US military realignment, there will be an increase of about 40,000 persons, including family dependents, in 2014 when the realignment will be completed. The island's population-currently about 160,000-will increase 25 PERCENT at a stroke.

In the realignment of US forces, the Army, Navy, and Air Force will also reinforce their troop strengths. Andersen Air Force Base, located in the northern part of Guam, deploys unmanned reconnaissance planes and air tankers on a standing basis. Apra Harbor on the western side of Guam is home to three nuclear-powered submarines, and the port will have a new wharf for aircraft carriers. At present, the US military deploys almost no ground troops on Guam. The USMC will deploy troops from Okinawa to the island, and the Army will also deploy an air defense unit there against ballistic missiles. The total cost of base construction on Guam is estimated at approximately 15 billion dollars or about 1.74 trillion yen.

"The presence of US forces on Okinawa may be a burden for the local people," says Tony Ramolina, a senior official of the Guam government for the US military realignment. "But," he added, "We are also Americans." He also said, "We welcome them very much."

Tourists visiting Guam and US forces based there have propped up the island's local economy. However, the number of visitors to Guam—which peaked at 1,380,000 in 1997—halved in 2003 in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and a raging typhoon that hit the island. The island's tourism is still in a slump. And then, the USMC decided to move its troops from Okinawa to Guam.

The USMC is a hero that liberated the Guam from the now-defunct Japanese military. The local media frequently reported on the "special military procurements," saying the reinforcement of US forces will revive the economy of Guam. The island's local population is generally affirmative about hosting troops from Okinawa.

Japan is going to pay for the planned construction of about 3,500 housing units on Guam for troops and their families to be moved there from Okinawa. The candidate site of housing construction is at Finegayan, which is situated in the northwestern part of Guam. Private businesses are now in a rush for housing construction near Finegayan. There is also an influx of money from China and South Korea. An international race for business chances is heating up over a huge amount of construction investments.

(8) Commentary by former Ambassador to Thailand Hisahiko Okazaki: Do not mishandle the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law

SANKEI (Page 13) (Slightly abridged)

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August 30, 2007

Changed East Asia situation

What the shuffled Abe administration must do first of all, if it does nothing else, is to renew the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law. I feel strongly about this because of recent changes going on in the international situation affecting East Asia.

The situation in East Asia can be evaluated as the absence of America and the shrinking presence of Japan. In contrast, the influence of China is growing greater, and the expectation of China by the United States, or America's deference toward China, is striking. The era of the first term of the Bush administration, in which pro-Japan officials were firmly in charge of East Asia policy, has come and gone. Already Washington has deemed the cooperation of China, which sits on the UN Security Council, to be necessary for the war on terror and the war in Iraq. In recent years, it has been relying solely on China when it comes to North Korean issues.

America's deference to China is almost scandalous. When Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian was transiting the US mainland, he could only come via Alaska. Moreover, the US government reportedly is winking at China's weapons exports to Iran. At a time like this, what do you think would happen if Japan were to pull its fuel-supply ships from the Indian Ocean?

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386 called on the international community to make efforts to counter terrorism, and the G-8 countries responded by dispatching warships of various kinds. The only exception was Russia, which was scarred by its past experience in Afghanistan, so it should not be placed in the same category as Japan, which has nothing to feel inferior about when it comes to the Afghan issue.

Reason for opposing the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law

If at this point, only Japan were to pull out its ships, the impression that its influence in the international community was



shrinking would be unavoidable. Pro-Japanese groups in the United States would be disappointed, and anti-Japanese groups would be spurred on. Average Americans would think that what they had heard about Japan being that kind of country was so. The relationship of trust between Japan and the United States, built up so proudly over many administrations, would be severely undermined.

Although Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa, referring to the extension of the Anti-Terrorism Law's extension, told US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer, "The US began the Afghan war without first obtaining the consensus of the international community," his perception of the facts was clearly mistaken, speaking from the way that each nation responded at the time. Even now when I read the reason why the DPJ is against the bill, I recall no such things having ever been said. Although the government has given all sorts of reasons (for the Indian Ocean dispatch), what it all amounts to is that deliberations on the bill have yet to be fully exhausted, and it would seem that the government has not fulfilled its accountability.

After Diet deliberations are procedurally completed, the opposition then can play its favorite game of opposing the bill. There are times when minor parties use such clever arguments to assert their

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reason for existing, for as long as they are minor parties, national interest will not be harmed by such. However, this time the DPJ is a responsible party, having a majority of seats in the Upper House. It should not express its reason for existence by only taking opposing stances. The need for that no longer exists. It is international conventional wisdom that the desirable pattern for foreign policy is to have basic bipartisanship.

If the DPJ pursues the government on the issues, it should choose mainly domestic ones. If it should be the pension issue, on which the LDP lost the confidence of the people, as the results of the last election show, I would like them to tangle in the next Diet session on that issue.

The definition of a responsible party

Indeed, what the public expects of the DPJ is to tackle issues that have the deepest impact on the national life. The Japanese people do not at all wish to see the government attacked in a way that will make the international community look down on Japan. The only ones thinking that way are a few politicians who will do anything to further the party's interests and strategy and a biased segment of the mass media.

If Japan is to have a true two-party system, it is time for the DPJ to show the nation that it is a responsible party. That is within the realm of possibility. Ever since Prime Minister Koizumi said that he was going to "destroy the LDP," the party's traditional vote-getting machinery has changed qualitatively. In the future, the question is whether or not a responsible party capable of alternating with the LDP in power can exist. In defining what a responsible party is, the most important element is whether or not it can carry out foreign and security policies in a non-partisan way. The Japan Socialist Party of the Cold War era lacked that capability.

But now the situation is different. The public does not expect such actions from a party as squaring its shoulders and mouthing anti-US statements and the like. If a two-party system is to be created, it is time for parties to truly vie for support from the nation by squaring off mainly on issues of concern to the national life.

(9) Extending antiterrorism law serves Japan's national interests

SANKEI (Page 7) (Abridged slightly)  
September 2, 2007

By Satoshi Morimoto, director of Institute of World Studies,  
Takushoku University

The ruling and opposition blocs are expected to fiercely lock horns over an extension of the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law in the next extraordinary Diet session. Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa is trying to scrap the bill to extend the law with the aim of forcing the prime minister to dissolve the House of Representatives for a snap election. Ozawa's attempt raises questions as to whether pulling the Maritime Self-Defense Force out of the Indian Ocean serves Japan's national interests and who should be held responsible -- the Abe administration or the DPJ. The fate of Ozawa's plan would be determined by decisions by the international community and the Japanese public.

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Acts of terrorism have occurred in various parts of the world since 9/11. Although the South Korean hostages have finally been released, the situation in Afghanistan is still unstable due to violence by al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants. The United States and NATO members launched operations in Afghanistan in October 2001 in the wake of 9/11. About 50,000 troops from the United States and 37 countries are now engaged in the antiterrorism operation in Afghanistan.

Islamic terrorists who were trained in the area stretching from southeastern Afghanistan to northeastern Pakistan have been conducting such activities as smuggling drugs out of Afghanistan via Pakistan to purchase weaponry and ammunition and smuggle them back into Afghanistan in addition to reaching the Gulf region via Iran and conducting terrorist activities in Europe and Asia. Maritime interdiction operations (MIO) have been conducted in the Indian Ocean to stop and search cargo ships aimed at identifying and intercepting terrorists.

Japan enacted the Antiterrorism Law in November 2001 and sent MSDF support ships and destroyers to the Indian Ocean. Their services to provide fuel and water to naval vessels and helicopters of 11 countries have won Japan a high international reputation. The general public must appreciate the MSDF's four-and-a-half-year mission in the Indian Ocean under the scorching sun.

Pakistan in particular has been totally dependent on the MSDF's refueling services. In her talks with Prime Minister Abe last week, visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel also asked for an extension of the MSDF mission in the Indian Ocean, expressing her appreciation for Japan's commitment.

A country eager to withdraw from the antiterrorism operation in Afghanistan, in which over 40 countries are involved, will not be able to win an important position and role in the United Nations. The United States has high expectations for Japan's continued activities in the Indian Ocean. To Japan, America's cooperation is also essential in dealing with possible threats, such as North Korea and China. Japan did not send MSDF troops to the Indian Ocean by blindly following in America's footsteps. The MSDF has been assisting such countries as France, Germany and Pakistan besides the United States. Naval vessels of those countries participating in the MIO have accomplished remarkable results in confiscating drugs and weapons and intercepting terrorists. Disclosing such information would reduce deterrence.

In opposing an extension of the Antiterrorism Law, DPJ President Ozawa cited a lack of authorization by a UN Security Council resolution. True, the operations in Afghanistan were initiated by the United States and Britain by exercising their rights to self-defense. Japan, on the other hand, enacted the Antiterrorism Law to join the operations in Afghanistan based on a UN resolution. Equating a UN resolution with justice is incorrect. A political party eager to abolish the revision bill to terminate antiterrorism activities would not appear capable of taking power in the eyes of other countries, including the United States.

Nevertheless, chances remain slim for the revision bill to clear the Diet as long as the DPJ opposes it. The government and ruling coalition have shown some flexibility in order to win the DPJ's understanding and cooperation. Altering the content of the current law, specifically what the SDF should do and the term of activities,

would be one option. Establishing a general law or a new law as the

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legal basis for the MSDF mission would be another approach. Another compromise would be extending the Indian Ocean mission for a limited period of time in return for expanding the airlift operation to include the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan by combining the Antiterrorism Law with the Iraq Special Measures Law.

Securing fuel and water supplies for other countries ahead of Japan's departure would be another option. In any case, it is essential for the Japanese public to understand that Japan's continued commitment to international antiterrorism efforts services the country's national interests.

I would like to see heated Diet debate on an extension of the Antiterrorism Law, which is to expire on November 1, until the last moment. The upcoming Diet session will make clear if Japan has the courage and is determined to make substantial contributions to bringing peace and stability to the world even by paying a price for it.

(10) Antiterrorism Special Measures Law: Defense minister says, "I'm willing to listen to any request from opposition parties"; Will the government's bill revising law be modified or will new legislation be created?

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September 4, 2007

Defense Minister Masahiko Komura in a speech at a Tokyo hotel yesterday referred to the question of extending the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations now going on in the Indian Ocean under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. "I'm ready to listen to whatever opposition parties may request if they are moving toward extending the term of the current refueling services," he said. The defense minister's remarks are taken to mean that he is willing to accept as many requests as possible from opposition parties in order to continue the MSDF's refueling activities after Nov. 2. Komura continued: "Since the opposition bloc now holds a majority in the Upper House (and can vote down the bill), it will not be that easy to have the Lower House again pass the bill extending the law by a two-thirds majority." Opposition parties, including the largest, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), have not indicated any willingness to respond to discussions with the ruling bloc over extending the MSDF's refueling activities (in the Indian Ocean). What will happen to the bill amending the law is unclear.

The special measures law that has allowed MSDF ships to refuel vessels from the multinational force in the Indian Ocean since December 2001 expires on Nov. 1. The government initially planned to submit a bill extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law for another one year to an extraordinary session of the Diet to be convened on Sept. 10, but it has now found itself in a difficult situation, meeting strong opposition from Ichiro Ozawa, president of the DPJ, which has gained political momentum after winning a landslide victory in the July Upper House election. The government is even being forced to consider other options, such as adopting a new law or revising the current bill extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law.

Although the ultimate goal for the government and ruling coalition is to extend the term of the MSDF's refueling operations, they have yet to come up with a unified strategy to reach that end.

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The government's basic policy line is to present a bill amending the law to extend it by a year. Extending the law until Nov. 1 of next year would automatically extend refueling operations. But, if the bill is not adopted by Nov. 1, the legislation which the MSDF relies

on to authorize its refueling activities would be lost. If the opposition bloc, citing the need for thorough deliberations, stalls for time or adopts its own legislation scrapping the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, while refusing to discuss the main bill on the grounds of "double jeopardy," the government will find it difficult to get the revision bill adopted.

Aware of these possibilities, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Policy Research Council Chairman Nobuteru Ishihara, as well as Komura, has shown flexibility about consultations with the DPJ. Ishihara, keeping in mind the DPJ's plan to strengthen cooperation in the civilian sector to fight terrorism, indicated that he would positively respond to talks for modifying the revision bill, saying: "It's fine to work together in the civilian sector. I'd like to discuss the matter with the DPJ."

The proponent of producing new legislation was Toshihiro Nikai, chairman of the LDP's General Council. Two cases are being studied. One is to submit a new bill mentioning only the MSDF's operations instead of producing a bill revising the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. The other is to submit new legislation after the expiration of that law. In other words, one approach is for the LDP to put the DPJ's ideas into a revised bill and then get the bill adopted. The other approach is for the LDP to enact new legislation in the last days of the extraordinary Diet session so as to minimize the interruption of the MSDF's refueling services.

Speaking of these moves in the government and the ruling coalition for establishing new legislation, Ozawa yesterday told reporters at Karuizawa Town, Nagano Prefecture: "It's troublesome to hear someone who does not understand the DPJ's assertions propose such a thing. Our position is that Japan can't take part in any peacekeeping operations that are not led or authorized by the United Nations." Ozawa thus indicated he would refuse to hold consultations with the ruling bloc.

In this connection, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano referred to the fact at a press conference yesterday afternoon that Kenji Eda, a member of the House of Representatives, pointed out in his website that more than 80 PERCENT of oil provided by the MSDF to other countries' vessels had been used for the Iraq operations, and made this rebuttal: "All fuel provided by Japan was used to fight terrorism in Afghanistan."

DONOVAN